Verbal + written agreement p/b

Project I.D. No. 74

NAME: Haji, Ko DATE OF BIRTH: 1896 PLACE OF BIRTH: Okayama
Age: 78 Sex: F Marital Status: M Education: High School

PRE-WAR:
Date of arrival in U.S.: 1920 Age: 24 M.S. M Port of entry: Seattle
Occupation/s: 1. Housewife 2. 3.
Place of residence: 1. Monroe, Washington 2. 3.
Religious affiliation: Buddhist Church
Community organizations/activities:

EVACUATION:
Name of assembly center:
Name of relocation center: Tule Lake War R. C.
Dispensation of property: Store in 2 families' home Names of bank/s:
Jobs held in camp: 1. 2.
Jobs held outside of camp:
Left camp to go to: Spokane, Washington

POST-WAR:
Date returned to West Coast:
Address/es: 1. Spokane, Washington 2. Seattle, Washington
3.
Religious affiliation: Christian Church
Activities: 1. 2. 3.
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death:

Name of interviewer: H. Takarabe Date: 5/21/1974 Place: Seattle, Washington
Translater: Yasuke akematsu

NAME: KO HAJI

AGE: 78

DATE OF BIRTH: 1896

PLACE OF BIRTH: Okayama Ken

YEAR OF ENTRY INTO THE USA: 1919, 23 years old

MAJOR OCCUPATION: Midwife, Housewife

CAMP: Tule Lake

DATE OF INTERIVE: May, 21, 1974

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

INTERVIEWER: Heihachiro Takarabe

TRANSLATOR: Yasuka Akamatsu

Mrs. Ko Haji, Seattle, Washington

Interviewed by Rev. H. Takarabe on 5-21-74

Q: I came to interview you for our Issei History Project. I will appreciate it if you will answer what you can to my questions. Will you please tell me your name?

A: My name is Ko Haji.

Q: Whwere were you born?

A: In an small country village in Ashimori, Kirigun, Okayama Prefecture, Japan. I attended elementary school, junior high school and one year in girls high school there. Then I entered a mid-wife's school and graduated. After graduation, I went to work at the Prefecture Hospital. Took a leave for a while because of illness but after recovery went back to work again and was employed there until I got married in 1920.

Q: When were you born?

A: In 1896 (Meiji 29).

Q: How old are you now?

A: I wi ll be 78 years old when my birthday comes.

Q: What was your family occupation?

A: Farming.

Q: What was your religion?

A: Nichiren Buddhist.

Q: Do you remember something of your childhood days?

A: My father was in America. My grandfather sat down and made ropes and slippers out of straw during the winter months. He made me sit beside him and told me the life story of Nichiren Shouin (St. Nichiren) over and over and told me to believe in him. While I was at the hospital, the head nurse was a faithful christian and she took me to hear a caucasian missionary who spoke fluent Japanese. This is when I was exposed to Christianity for the first time and I began to attend such meetings. Although I had the opportunity, I didn't become a Christian before my marriage.

After marriage, I came to this country but my husband worked for the railroad and we lived where there were no Japanese. My children started to go to church school and the minister asked me to come to church but I didn't have the courage to go because I couldn't understand English. Time passed and WWII broke out and we h ad to evacuate and go to camp. As soon as I entered the camp, I started to attend Christian Service in Japanese.

My husband was baptized in 1914 in a Catholic Church. The reason he was baptized in a Catholic Church was because he started to take English courses at Gonzaga College in Spokane. He said that once he made that decision, he took the path that he thought God wanted him to take and it was a great strength to him. I was quite moved by what he said but I did not become a Christian before WWII.

After we entered the camp, we both started to go to church meetings regularly. After a while, the ministers kept coming to persuade us to receive baptism. I attended English

classes in camp because my children thought I should learn English. One day, coming home from class, Mrs. Iwatsuki (of Hood River, Oregon) mentioned that it was about time I received baptism and become a christian. I felt something change in me so I went directly to a church leader in our ward and mentioned about baptism. He suggested not to wait until Sunday but receive baptism on Wednesday night at the prayer meeting because my daughter was leaving camp to relocate on Thursday. Thus I was baptized by Rev. Kitagawa at Rev. Kuroda's living quarter witnessed by many friends. I left camp soon after that.

At that time, there was a shortage of railroad workers so my husband decided to go out and work. I waited for my son to finish his high school course for graduation. Then we left camp before the graduation ceremony was held.

Q: Where did you go to?

A: We went to Spokane, Washington. The main office for the railroad company was there and they accepted responsibility of looking after us. My son, my younger daughter and I left Tule Lake together. The elder daughter was already relocated in Washington D.C.

My son attended college one year and was inducted into Army service. He was killed in action only 4 months after he was inducted. In those days, they were short of soldiers and boys were sent over seas after only 4 weeks of training. Then they were sent to the front line in 4 days. His last letter to us was written on Easter Sunday, April 2nd, and he died on April 9th.

I was shocked when I heard that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and I was also shocked when America dropped A-bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. However, I thought Japan had to take the fate because they started the war. Because of the war, I think I was able to find God and became a christian. I was given the opportunity to listen to messages in Japanese by Japanese ministers.

Losing my only son in the war was a great sadness to me but it also helped me find God. When my son was leaving, I said I wished he could stay even a day longer with me. His reply was, "Mother, don't you think I should go as soon as possible to relieve those who are already there?" He also told me not to go to work because I was not healthy. He wanted me to attend church meetings and pray. He was 18 years old when he left. My son's words, I cannot forget.

Q: Going back again, what was your maiden name?

A: My maiden name was Kawata.

Q: Was your father in America?

A: He came to America when I was 9 years old.

Q: Did he return to Japan?

A: He came back to Japan when I was in nursing school.

Q: Do you know where he was in America?

A: Somewhere in California. He rented a place and farmed with my brother.

Q: Do you know why he came to America?

A: In those days, many Japanese came to this country to work and make money, then return to Japan and invest the money into something.

Q: Did your father succeed?

A: I think he just made enough to get by.

Q: Did your brother come back to Japan?

A: He did but he died soon after he returned.

Q: What sort of a person was your father?

A: My father was a "Yōshi" (adopted son-in-law). My mother was quiet and Father was rather arrogant but he was a good father to me.

Q: Were there just 2 children?

A: I had another elder brother but he also died when he was young.

Q: Do you remember your elementary school days?

A: There were 18 blocks to my school. In the winter, we walked in the snow. When I was older, I lead about 20 students to school. When the cords on their clogs broke on the way to school, I repaired it for them. I was an honor student all through elementary school and my father was very happy about it. He was strict towards mother but tender towards us. I think I was influenced by my grandfather greatly.

Q: What did you do in Nursing School?

A: I completed nursing and mid-wife's course and received a license to practice in Japan. However, after I came to America, I did not apply for a licence to practice because I started to have my family and I did not want to hire maids to take care of my children.

Q: Do you remember any happy occasions you had in Japan?

A: I don't remember any happy or sad occasion.

Q: How did you get married?

A: When my husband-to-be returned from America to visit his mother, arrangements of marriage between us was brought up among our relatives. We were distantly related. A person, I called "Uncle" came to see me at the hospital where I was working to find out if I would go to America. He said my brother consented to give me away if I was willing to go. I consdented and the preparation for marriage was hurried and we were married at this man's home. We went on our honeymoon for about a week and he had to return to his job in America as a section foreman for a railroad company. He couldn't wait until I got my passport and etcs. I resigned from my job soon after he left, made preparations and came to America by myself.

Q: How old was your husband when you got married?

A: He was 29 and I was 23 years old.

Q: He was rather young for a foreman, wasn't he?

A: Yes, he didn't know English very well but he started out as a bookkeeper and when a foreman retired, he was asked to take his place. He worked 40 years as a foreman and retired at the age of 65.

Q: Where did you arrive in America?

A: Harrington, Washington. It's about 250 miles from Seattle, Wash. That's where my husband was working.

Q: Where did the ship arrive?

A: At Seattle, Washington by Hawaii Maru.

Q: What sort of persons were on the ship?

A: There were some picture brides. They were met by husbands whom they were meeting for the first time. I think one bride rejected to go to her husband and was deported back to Japan.

I stayed at the immigration office 5 weeks because they suspected I had intestinal worms. It was so long I cried. When they were ready to release me, they sent a telegram to my husband. He came after me and took me to his home near Spokane, Wash. My life in America began then.

Q: What was your first impression of America?

A: I was treated very well wherever I went.

Q: Were your neighbors all caucasians?

A: Yes.

Q: Did your husband own a home?

A: We were provided with a company house. The company took care of the upkeep of the house also. I didn't go through hardship as some others did.

Q: Did your husband stay there until WWII?

A: When the war broke out, we were living in Monroe, Wash. about 30 miles from Seattle. My husband was replaced by an Italian man. People couldn't understand why they had to replace him. The company had to explain that the war was between Japan and America.

Q: Do you remember something about the Depression?

A: Yes, I do. My husband's section was divided in two and his salary was cut in half but we were able to get by. He was still receiving more than others in that small town. Many went through hardships.

Q: Who worked under your husband?

A: There were Italians, caucasians and Filipinos. In Harrington, there were two young Japanese boys. But most of the time, he had caucasians working under him. The mothers were happy to have their boys work under my Christian husband because he never drank liquor. He said he was glad he made his pledge to God. Now, he is hard of hearing and can't go to church but he reads Christian books and literatures.

Q: Were you ever homesick for Japan?

A: No, I never was.

Q: Was there any comical happenings?

A: I didn't understand English very well but I got along well with caucasians. When my children started going to school, I went to PTA meetings and couldn't converse but the other ladies came near me and conversed in the manner that I didn't have to say much and kept me company.

Q: How many children did you have?

A: I had one son and 2 daughters.

Q: Is there anything that happened before the war that stands out in your memory?

A: No. About the end of the war, when we were living in Monroe, we were thinking of buying a home there for our son, Tom. When he was killed in action, we decided to go to Spokane and buy a home there.

Q: What are your hobbies?

A: I don't have any. I learned a little "Ikebana" (flower arrangement) but it conflicted with my schedule so I had to quit.

Q: When you were raising your children, were there any hardship?

A: Yes, it wasn't like now. We had to heat our room with a wood stove, boil our water and heat our iron over the stove. It was hard but it was good for the children. They offered to help.

I taught Japanes to my children. My daughters still write to me in Japanese.

Q: Did you worry about your children's friends?
A: I never have. We lived in a small town and we didn't have to worry about our children like they do now.

Q: How old was your eldest when the war broke out?
A: My children were all grown by then.

Q: Do you remember your neighbors having hardships?
A: I have helped some people but there weren't much hardship. I suffered three major illnesses and when I had a major surgery, the company offered to help us but we managed to pay the bills. Friends were very good to us.

Q: What kind of illness did you suffer?
A: When I was in the 7th month of pregnancy carring my eldest child, I suffered high fever and had to go to a hospital. Just before I was to go into surgery, I expelled a large round worm (intestinal worm) and the fever came down. Second illness was the surgery for gallstones. Post-operative condition wasn't good and I had to have a second surgery a year later. A Japanese couple took care of the children while I was ill.

Q: Was that your last illness?
A: I haven't been in a hospital since. I have diabetes now which I am taking care of.

Q: How did you feel when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: My husband was out fishing that day. We had a television and I was watching it. I didn't understand English well but I could tell something had happened by the excitement on the television pictures. A caucasian neighbor's son was with me but he went home. I realized that Pearl Harbor was attacked by Japanese.

Q: Did you feel that you were in danger?

A: I thought something may happen.

Q: What happened after that?

A: We were living in the section house with a large yard. We heard footsteps at nights. Some were watching so that we would not get hurt but on the other hand some may have been watching to see what we would do. Our neighbors were good and tried to comfort us by saying the war was over there and we had nothing to do with it.

Q: What did you do with your household goods at the time of evacuation?

A: A friend who had a hardware store, stored our appliances in his basement and other furnitures were stored with two other families. When we were in camp, someone wanted to buy our washing machine and vacuum cleaner but I didn't sell anything. When we got out of camp and went to Spokane, our stored appliances and furnitures were brought there at government expense.

Q: Did you go to an Assembly Center?

A: We went directly to Tule Lake War Relocation Center from home. We were there one year. I studied English and my husband worked as a maintenance foreman and received $16.00 per month. I went to Church Meetings on Sundays and bible class on Wednesday. I don't remember anything bad about the camp.

Q: Were you there when the "Loyalty" questionaire was passed out?

A: We left the center about that time.

Q: Did some others relocate fromcamp before you?

A: I think we were about the first to relocate as a family. My husband was called by the Great Northern Railroad Co. They found a hotel room for us. My husband went out first. I went there with my son and younger daughter a little later. My eldest daughter went to Washington D.C. to work for the government.

Q: Was she a university graduate?

A: No. She had completed a business school course and passed the civil service examination. At Tule Lake W.R.A. Center, she was the secretary to the superintendent of schools.

Q: How long did you stay at the hotel?

A: We stayed there a while and later rented a house from a friend. After the war, we bought a house in Seattle.

Q: Did your husband work for the same company?

A: Yes, he retired from the same company after the war.

Q: Did your husband tell you of any special experience he had?

A: He came to the United States to study farming. He worked as a farm laborer for a while but found out it was hard work. A friend told him to come and work as a bookkeeper for the railroad company. Later he became a foreman.

Q: How much education did he have?

A: He just had elementary education in Japan and went to an evening class for a while after he came to this country. He worked as a gang foreman and as a section foreman for the railroad until he reached 65. When he retired from the railroad, a young churchman asked him to help with his gardening business. He worked for him 2 1/2 years. Then a Japanese Tea garden was built in Seattle. He was asked to be the caretaker and worked there about 6 years. After that, he retired completely and started to work on his own "Bonsai" plants (miniature dwarfed trees). We are able to make a living by the income from his railroad pension and social security benefits. Today, he went trout fishing to a place not too far away.

Q: Do you belong to any other organization besides the church?

A: No. My husband doesn't like to be in organizations.

Q: What did you think of Niseis going into the armed services?

A: I didn't have much thoughts.

Q: Did your son volunteer into Service?

A: No. He was drafted.

Q: Did he hate to go?

A: No, he didn't say that. He did want to finish college. He was a freshman in college when he was drafted.

Q: It was too bad you had to lose your only son in the war.

A: It is sad but I am glad he was able to serve his country and he is respected for that. I am thankful that my life was changed because of the war and it is a job that I became to know God.

Q: Do you have grandchildren?

A: I have one grandchild and one great-grandchild.

Q: As an Issei, what do you wish to convey to the Sanseis and Yonseis (3rd and 4th generation)?

A: As an Issei, there is a lonely feeling. It is not the fault of anyone. Time has changed so drastically that there is something hard for us to understand but we have to accept it.

Q: For instance, what are some of those things?

A: It's hard to say. I should not quote for other Isseis. For instance, at the church we are accumstomed to solemn worship services. When the younger generation are noisy and play loud

music in their worship services, we must understand and accept it as it is the way they want it now days.

Q: What do you think are the good qualities of the Japanese Isseis?

A: My husband worked hard 10 hours a day and he got his physical exercise at work and he was satisfied if I cooked him a good meal. Now days, the younger generation are too busy with many activities. We cannot say that is wrong for them to be involved in that.

Q: Do yuu think the Sanseis should realize their identity as Japanese?

A: Yes, I think so. My granddaughter's husband is a caucasian. When they came to see me on Easter, he asked if he could have something as a keepsake from us grandparents. I realized that they are interested in us and have a concern for us. I do not know if all young people have this feeling. He just graduated from law school and he is going to work with his father. My granddaughter is also studying law. I think he is proud that he is married to a Japanese Sansei.

Q: How many years has it been since you came to U.S.A.?

A: 54 years.

Q: There must be many memories in those 54 years?

A: Yes, there are. I haven't regretted coming here. People are sympathetic that I lost my only son but I am proud of him because he served his country and he is remembered for that. Every

Memorial Day, he is honored but I think the ones that served in the war, came back and still working for their country are doing a greater job.

Q: I think the Isseis were great and they should be commended.
A: I think each individual has different feelings, interpretations and understanding.

Q: I would like to have this tape translated into English to be read by Sanseis and Yonseis. We would also like to compile the Issei life stories into a book. Can I have your authorization to do this?
A: Yes, it isn't worth much but you may.

Q: Please sign your name and write in today's date, May 21, 1974 on this paper for me.
A: Yes, I shall.

Q: Thank you for the interview.
A: I wish there were better materials.

Q: No, this is fine. You say you haven't had hardships but don't you think you went through more hardships than you would have had if you stayed in Japan?
A: When I left Japan, my elder brother told me "don't go to America thinking that you'll be able to wear nice clothes everyday and be a hady of leisure. You are going as a railroad

worker's wife and you'll be expected to make lunch everyday for your husband and wash his dirty coveralls. I expected to do this so it wasn't hard at all. Children were born before long and everyday was busy but it was a job. I didn't cry like some others who were homesick for Japan.

Q: When did your mother pass away?

A: Little before I left Japan.

Q: Your father was deceased also, wasn't he?

A: Yes, he was deceased.

Q: Do you have anyone in Japan now?

A: No, I haven't. I should visit my parents' grave in Japan but I am reluctant to spend lot of money to go. If someone close was there, I might feel like going. I haven't visited Japan since I came here.

Q: Is your husband a talkative person or a quiet person?

A: He doesn't talk too much.

Q: Is he quiet and likes to work?

A: Hes. He came to America when he was 17 years old. He was the only child and his mother did everything he asked for during his childhood days. Since he came to America, he has not been demanding at all. He appreciates whatever I prepare for him.

Q: You are very fortunate because you and your husband had a

good life together. How old are you?

A: I am 78 years old.

Q: You look fine and young for your age. Have you always lived in this area since you came to America?

A: Yes, we have lived and worked in the State of Washington. The only time we were away was for a while during the war when we were at Tule Lake. When we were there, the railroad company in Oregon wanted my husband to come and work for them but my husband told them he wanted to come back to Washington.

Q: When did he retire?

A: He retired from the railroad at 65 but he tells me he has worked 60 years in America. He is small but a health person.

Q: Did you do any work since the war?

A: I worked as a nurse in Japan but I did not have to work since I came here. If we had a large family and my husband's earnings were not enough, I may have worked. I thank God for being good to me.

Q: Has it been long since you started to go to the Blaine Memorial United Methodist Church here? (Japanese Church)

A: We came here in 1953. Its about 20 years. I was baptized in 1943 in Tule Lake. In Spokane, I attended Highland United Methodist Church (Japanese).

Q: Have you heard anything about your father's life in America?
A: No, I haven't. My father came to America when I was 9 years old and came back to Japan when I was grown. Then I came to America so I didn't get to know him well.

Q: How was your grandfather?
A: He did not have much education but he was a gentleman. He was an adopted-son-in-law (Yōshi). My grandmother was an only child. My father was also an adopted son-in-law because my mother was also the only child. My grandfather was a reputable man and people asked him to come to their home as a peacemaker when they had trouble.

Q: What sort of things did he say?
A: I have followed his advice all through my life. Some of the things he said was it is a shame to a housewife if the bottom of their pots and pans were black. Be sure and polish your pots and pans before you powder your nose. Another is he said one losss alot if one is a late riser. Therefore, I never slept till late in the mornings. He always aaid to his wife--thank you for the good food even if it was a simple menu. He did not overeat and he lived to a good old age. He died at near 80. Those days, 80 was very rare. He followed the Nichiren Faith. He received lot of gifts each year from the couples he helped get married. (It is the custom in Japan that young couples take gifts to their match-maker at the end of the year for three years following their marriage).

Q: How long did your grandmother live?

A: She died when my grandfather was 29 years old with child-birth. He did not remarry for the sake of my mother. He was a good man and I remember him well.

Q: Was he an officer in the village?

A: No, I don't think so but he was active in the community service. He was also good to visiting priests and others and was always willing to let them stay overnight because transportation was inconvenient those days. If we didn't have WWII, I probably would still be a Nichiren. My grandfather left so much for me. I hope I could leave something worthwhile to my grandchildren.

Q: When did your grandfather die?

A: I think he died when I wasabout 13. I remember the funeral.

Q: Do you go to funerals in other churches here?

A: We don't go unless its for someone we have associated with because there are so many. I go to all funerals held in our church.

Q: Does your husband go fishing often?

A: He has no other hobbies. He likes to watch sport programs on television. My son was physically small but he was good in atheletics.

Q: Are you tired?

A: No. I am not but I am sorry I haven't much to offer.

(interrupted by a guest)

"The End"

(translated by Mrs. Akamatsu)